

The nonprofit Mountain Area Information Network (MAIN) holds the license to WPVM-LP, 103.5 FM in Asheville, North Carolina. WPVM-LP began broadcasting in October, 2003.

From the beginning, WPVM-LP has encountered heavy interference from a non-local full-power station, WIMZ, 103.5 FM in Knoxville, Tennessee -- two hours by car from Asheville. This interference has engendered vociferous complaints from listeners.

For example, a listener can be driving in east Asheville in the direction of downtown tuned into WPVM-LP for a thoughtful discussion on local clean-air policies and issues, but in the space of 10 seconds that local-issue discussion gives way to "shock jock" ranting from a station 120 miles away and in another state!

This interference effectively blocks WPVM-LP's signal in Asheville's central business district and the heavily populated neighborhoods of Montford, north Asheville, Grove Park, and University Heights, home to the University of North Carolina-Asheville campus. Indeed, WPVM-LP's signal cannot be heard on the sidewalk outside our downtown studio between the Asheville Civic Center and the main branch of our public library!

This interference is due to the peculiarities of our Appalachian mountain terrain. Given the fact that Asheville, NC and Knoxville, TN are 120 miles apart with the Great Smoky Mountains in between, it would seem impossible for a radio signal from Knoxville to cause such disruption in Asheville.

Despite the mountain barrier, Asheville and Knoxville are connected by the French Broad River, which flows north through Asheville and then turns northeast to Knoxville. The signal of WIMZ-FM slips through the mountain barrier by following the low contour of the French Broad River streambed.

This peculiarity of terrain is why the Mountain Area Information Network (MAIN) is formally requesting that the FCC allow "contour protection" analysis for LPFM stations, just as it does for full-power stations. This request directly aligns with the FCC's goal to "strengthen the viability of those [LPFM] stations that are already operating," as noted in the FCC's "LPFM Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking" in MM Docket 99-25.

This interference problem caused by a non-local station has severely hampered the effectiveness of WPVM-LP in fulfilling the FCC's expressed localism goals. This problem has severely impacted our fundraising ability, which is so critical to the station's financial sustainability. It has also raised questions among our listeners -- and would-be listeners -- about the technical competency of WPVM-LP's staff and volunteers. Of course, these folks do not understand that our ability to solve WPVM-LP's signal problem rests with the FCC.

The Mountain Area Information Network (MAIN) is also formally requesting that the FCC eliminate the "third-adjacent channel" rule. The elimination of this rule would allow WPVM-LP to change its FM frequency and thereby avoid the massive interference from the non-local FM station in Knoxville, TN.

We are aware that the FCC's ability to eliminate the third-adjacent channel rule may rest with the Congress; therefore, we are enclosing a copy of a petition signed by our listeners and supporters calling for passage of the "Local Community Radio Act of 2005."

The Mountain Area Information Network (MAIN) is also formally requesting that nonprofit operators of LPFM stations be allowed to own translators to extend the LPFM signal to hard-to-reach areas. As a nonprofit regional community network, MAIN has provided online local news and information to 14 counties of the mountain region of North Carolina. Given MAIN's

10-year presence in these 14 mountain counties, we request that the FCC allow MAIN to own and operate translators that would extend WPVM-LP's broadcast signal to these same 14 counties.

MAIN's filing for the FCC's "LPFM Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking" in MM Docket 99-25 continues with an exhibit provided by our licensed radio engineer, Tim Warner. It concludes with an exhibit of the signatories to a petition in support of the "Local Community Radio Act of 2005."